

Remarks:

These remarks are responsive to the final Office action dated October 26, 2005.

Prior to entry of this Amendment, claims 1, 2, 4-7, 9 and 11-21 remained pending in the application. Applicants have herein cancelled claim 1 without prejudice. No claims have been added. None have been withdrawn. Claims 2, 4-7, 9 and 11-21 thus remain pending upon entry of the present Amendment.

Claims 7, 9 and 11-21 have been allowed. Claim 2 has been indicated allowable if rewritten in independent form to include the features of the base claim and any intervening claims. Pursuant to the Examiner's suggestion, claim 2 has been amended to independent form. Claim 2 thus is understood to be in allowable form. Claims 4-6 have been amended to depend from claim 2, and thus also are understood to be in allowable form.

Claims 1 and 4-6 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(e) based on Melo et al. (US 6,431,772). Although applicants respectfully traverse the rejection, in the interest of furthering prosecution of the present application, as noted above, claim 1 has been cancelled without prejudice. Claims 4-6 have been amended to depend from newly-independent claim 2. The rejections under 35 U.S.C. §102(e) based on Melo et al. thus are rendered moot.

Conclusion

Applicants believe that this application is now in condition for allowance, in view of the above amendments and remarks. Accordingly, applicants respectfully requests that the Examiner issue a Notice of Allowability covering the pending claims.

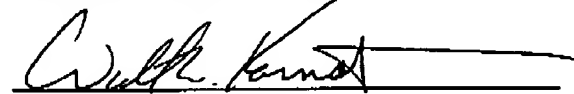
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Regarding the Examiner's statement of reasons for the indication of allowable subject matter, applicants agree with the Examiner's conclusions regarding patentability of the allowed claims, without necessarily agreeing with or acquiescing in the Examiner's reasoning. In particular, applicant believes that the application is allowable because the prior art fails to teach, anticipate or render obvious the invention as claimed.

If the Examiner has any questions, or if a telephone interview would in any way advance prosecution of the application, please contact the undersigned attorney of record.

Respectfully submitted,


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CERTIFICATE OF FACSIMILE TRANSMISSION

I hereby certify that this correspondence is being facsimile transmitted to Examiner S. Singh, Group Art Unit 2626, Assistant Commissioner for Patents, at facsimile number (571) 273-8300 on December 20, 2005.



Christie A. Doolittle

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